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aber auch sehr interessant". Das wäre wohl das Ideal für die Arbeit eines Studenten, doch muss man auch in Erwägung ziehen, dass es nie politisch von Seiten des Schülers ist, dem Lehrer zu sagen, dass die Arbeit leicht ist und dass es einer guten Zensur vielleicht förderlich sein mag, dem Lehrer Honig um den Bart zu schmieren, aber dennoch deutete die Einstimmigkeit dieses Urteils darauf hin, dass die Art des Unterrichts den Schülern gefiel. Trotzdem ja der Schüler keineswegs bestimmen soll, wie der Unterricht zu leiten ist, so sollte doch in einer Schule, wo die Wahl der Fächer dem Studenten fast ganz und gar überlassen ist, auf seine Stimme etwas gehört werden.

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### **Natural Methods of Teaching German Composition.**

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In a paper read before the Modern Language Association, Western division, last January, Professor Max Poll of Cincinnati gave some specimens from various German composition books of a type not long ago prevalent. One of these text books demanded of the students a translation into German of the following passage from the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table:

"Having in possession or in prospect the best part of half a world, with all its climates and soils to choose from, equipped with wings of fire and smoke that fly with him day and night, so that he counts his journey not in miles, but in degrees, and sees the seasons change as the wild-fowl sees them in his annual flights; with huge leviathans always ready to take him on their broad backs and push behind them with their pectoral or caudal fins the waters that seam the continent or separate the hemispheres; heir of all old civilizations, founder of that new one which, if all the prophecies of the human heart are not lies, is to be the noblest, as it is the last; isolated in space from the races that are governed by dynasties whose divine right grows out of human wrong, yet knit into the most absolute solidarity with mankind of all times and places by the one great thought he inherits as his national birthright; free to form and express his opinions on almost any subject, and assured that he will soon acquire the last franchise which men withhold from man,—that of stating the laws of his spiritual being and the beliefs he accepts without hindrance except from clearer views of truth,—he seems to want nothing for a large, wholesome, noble, beneficent life."

Another text made less severe demands upon the industry of its users, but it also presumed too much command of German on the part of the students for whom it was intended. One selection was as follows:

"On one occasion during the Seven Years' War a battle was expected the next day. The king was rather restless and went out to take a walk through the camp. He saw a soldier who tried to avoid him. The king saw that all was not right and challenged him." The conscientious student who made full use of the notes and vocabulary provided attained to the following rendition of the text:

„Auf einer Gelegenheit während des Siebenjährigen Krieges wurde eine Schlacht den nächsten Tag erwartet. Der König war *ruhelos* und ging aus, die Runde durch das Lager zu *nehmen*. Er sah einen Soldaten, welcher ihn zu vermeiden versuchte. Der König sah, dass nicht alles richtig war und *forderte ihn heraus*."

A second anecdote tells of a soldier who had two of his fingers shot off. His general said to him: "Why do you not go and have the hand dressed?" The soldier answered bravely "I am on guard and cannot leave my post until I am relieved." The translation was: "Warum gehst du nicht und lässt die Hand *kleiden*?" Der Soldat antwortete tapfer: "Ich bin auf Wache und kann meinen Posten nicht verlassen, bis ich *gelindert* bin."

The course in German composition used to be a monotonous one. It began with the translation of easy sentences into German and ended with the translation of difficult sentences into German. Serving as an intermediary between the English text and the German rendition stood the vocabulary at the end of the text book. With the aid of this vocabulary and his knowledge of syntax and form the student pieced together the translation. No doubt he received thereby much drill in grammar, but how little command of the language he attained is well illustrated by the translations just cited.

The modern course in German composition is not monotonous, but full of new experience, for it brings its followers into a series of new relations with the language. It begins necessarily with a close adherence to its model, the German text. Its successive stages are marked by a gradually increasing freedom from the text.

The course in German composition begins with the first day on which a connected sentence or anecdote is given to the beginner with the direction that he learn the text. The average beginner will understand that to mean: "Commit the story to memory." If so he need not to be set right. He will soon notice that the bolder students deviate from the form of the text and that the deviations are accepted as long as no violence is done to the grammar. He will find, too, that merely to learn the text in parrot-like fashion is insufficient, for he must learn to understand the questions asked in class, and to answer these questions requires a restatement of the facts in an order not found in the text. Progress at the first stage will be painfully slow, for even the adept student who feels that he has mastered the entire text so that he can reproduce it in any form, finds that he is

called to task for every incorrectly uttered vowel or consonant. Stories or anecdotes of ten or fifteen lines in length are desirable at this early stage. On the day of assignment these may be read and explained and the difficult passages discussed. Otherwise than as a preliminary assistance toward the mastery of the text, translation forms no part of the work of the elementary year in German. The entire work of the elementary course is intensive. The student should be able to discuss every text in class with book closed and should be able to reproduce orally the content of every text. There should be no attempt to cover any given number of pages in a year. Graded texts should be chosen, i. e. texts which emphasize in order certain grammatical points. The first text emphasizes the present of "sein", the next of "haben," and takes up the use of the accusative, the third brings in prepositions and introduces the dative, etc. It is not objectionable to introduce grammatical difficulties in the text, however, before they are elucidated grammatically. A student may master the expression "er wird gesehen" before he thoroughly understands the passive voice. Such anticipations of grammatical topics serve to quicken his curiosity and make clear the utility and helpfulness of the grammatical explanation when it comes.

The greater part of the composition in the first year should be of this oral nature, closely following the text. It should be oral to emphasize the fact that German is a spoken language and that a mastery of its pronunciation is the first step toward control of the language. It must be closely based on the text because the natural first step in language acquisition is the close imitation of models. Most elementary texts include also some sentences for written translation. These sentences are also based on the texts which have been already mastered. The written translation of these sentences is a valuable exercise. It is, however, distinctly secondary in importance to the oral mastery of the text. If anything has to be omitted, let it be the written translation of these sentences. The service these sentences render is that of calling the student's attention to his misimpressions as to orthography, to his inaccuracies of case ending and of formation generally. The same results may be obtained with greater certainty by means of the frequent and regular dictation exercise, which is one of the most essential parts of the student's training in composition.

It is undoubtedly advisable during the elementary year to have some written translation from English into German based on a text already mastered. The question now arises, when and how shall this be used. It is a good practice to cover in sequence ten or fifteen texts and take them up again in review. It is well to leave the translation of the sentences until this review stage, thus the student in writing his translations has a larger fund of experience to draw from. The sentences to be translated should consist of easy variations from the text and a given sentence should in-

clude not more than one or two new difficulties. If a student in translating a sentence makes four or five mistakes we may be sure the work of translation has injured his German more than it has helped it. It is therefore a good plan to discuss all such sentences in advance, permitting the students to take no written notes. It has been argued that this removal of the pitfalls is a flabby pedagogy, but the fact should be borne in mind that to learn to write and speak a foreign language correctly cannot be an easy task for the student, however much assistance he may receive in any way. From the point of view of educational psychology the proper time to correct an error is before it is made. Which will make the deeper impression upon the student,—the form which he has painstakingly but erroneously fabricated, or the correct form which with a stroke of the pencil he substitutes for it in the class room? For the present we cannot be dogmatic on this point, as to whether advance oral preparation of sentences is desirable or whether it weakens the student's grammatical powers. This is a question, however, that could readily be submitted to a test on two parallel classes under laboratory conditions.

The elementary stage of the course in German composition may be said to have been completed when the student has mastered a series of texts representative of the chief grammatical forms and constructions. *Not* the extensiveness of the texts treated, but the *intensity* of their treatment is the criterion of the work accomplished during this stage. To be more definite, fifty or sixty pages treated in this way in one year by students of thirteen to seventeen years is a liberal measure.

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The intermediate stage of German composition is in its essentials like the elementary. Here, too, a text forms the basis of oral and written composition, and the assignments in the texts should be short, not more than a page or two in length at first. Lively narration should form the subject matter. The questions should demand a freer handling of the subject matter. As a rule the student should be expected to answer questions with his book closed. If he does this he will answer in simple German which he is trying to make natural to himself, while with the book open before him he will use expressions that he is not ready to assimilate for years to come. After a story has been read a topical outline should be written on the board, such as:

Friedrich Wilhelm und seine Soldaten.

Die drei Fragen.

Ankunft des Irländers.

Anweisung des Offiziers.

Ankunft des Königs.

Die erste Frage und die Antwort.

Zweite und dritte Frage und Antwort.

This should be followed by question and answer, then by repetition of the story on the part of the students and this by the writing of the story. Such stories can also be introduced orally in the class hour. A lively hour may be spent this way and the whole constitutes one of the best all round tests of the students' control of the language.

The intermediate year calls for more extensive readings on the part of the student. It is best to treat certain texts intensively in class and to assign others for outside readings. These outside readings may well be made the subject of composition. Let fifteen pages be assigned for a certain day at least two weeks in advance. On the day fixed for the completion of the reading the instructor writes an outline of the subject matter on the board, summarizes in a five minute narration the content of the pages, the students not being permitted to take written notes. Then he asks a series of questions based on his narration; next he asks the students to narrate the same story, one taking up the thread where the other leaves off. If this is successfully achieved the instructor may safely require a written summary two or three pages in length, to be handed in on the following day.

Here a word may be said in regard to corrections. It is only the inexperienced teacher who has the patience to correct daily written sentences handed in. The teacher soon notices that the corrections made produce no impression on the student who at most glances at the bottom to see what grade was given. The teacher should *correct nothing*, he should *merely indicate* where an error exists and return the paper with instructions to the student to correct the error. The High School teacher is compelled to spare himself as much as possible the looking over of papers; when, however, as in the case of these compositions, he does look over papers he should rigidly see that every mark produces its reaction on the student. There are about five types of errors that students make: wrong word order, wrong auxiliary, wrong ending, wrong spelling, wrong punctuation. Let a circle over the verb represent an error in word order, three exclamation points represent a wrong auxiliary, a double underline the wrong ending, a stroke through the word incorrect spelling, and a single underline beneath the mark an error in punctuation. The student would then know the nature of the error and could proceed to correct it. Would it not make for efficiency if teachers of German could adopt a simple but arbitrary system of symbols indicating errors? This would make the work simpler for students who are often passed from one instructor to another. These symbols, by the way, are equally useful in *oral* composition. The teacher merely makes the symbol of the error on the blackboard and the student corrects himself without the flow of his conversation being audibly interrupted by the instructor.

It would be wrong to suppose that the student's first revision of the composition will be free from error. He has found a double underline beneath a word ending on the paper received Monday. He contentedly corrects the gender and returns the paper on Tuesday. On Wednesday he receives the paper with the word still underlined. He triumphantly corrects the number and returns the paper Friday, but next Monday he receives the paper with the correction still there. As a last resource he refers to his grammar and finds that he was laboring under a misconception as to the case of the noun. If the first composition is systematically dealt with in this way the later ones will be of a higher quality. It is a good practice to ask the student to tabulate his errors. At the bottom of the page he will thus write:

|                   |    |
|-------------------|----|
| Word order.....   | 4  |
| Endings .....     | 10 |
| Spelling .....    | 4  |
| Auxiliary .....   | 1  |
| Punctuation ..... | 4  |

This automatically warns him against his chief error next time.

The production of a good composition of the kind thus described is the severest all round test of the students' intermediate year. This composition work should be continued during the third stage; the number and difficulty of the pages assigned may be slightly increased and the amount of preliminary assistance given may be slightly diminished. Five or six such compositions in the course of a semester should be the maximum demand.

It will be seen that the process just described is still an imitation of a German model, but it is a freer imitation than that practiced at the outset. To contract into three pages a story of fifteen pages begins to require some real creative genius. Once this process is partially mastered a second phase of the intermediate course may be entered upon. The student may be asked to expand a five line story into a twenty line story. A recent text book \* shows how this stage should be controlled. It begins by relating in German the story of the mice who wanted to bell the cat. Then it asks a series of questions beginning somewhat as follows:

Was mag die Versammlung der Mäuse veranlasst haben? Wo und wann wurde die Sitzung abgehalten? Was war der Zweck derselben? Wie denken Sie sich diese Zusammenkunft der Mäuse? (Beschreiben Sie etwas genauer.) Was geschieht gewöhnlich bei solchen Beratungen, ehe es zu einem bestimmten Vorschlag kommt? (Es gibt viel zweckloses Gerede; wird hin und her gesprochen; Aufregung, Lärm, Unordnung usw.) Wer kam endlich zu Worte? (Beschreiben Sie das Mäuschen.)

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\* Boezinger: Mündliche und schriftliche Übungen. H. Holt & Co.

A „mündliche Aufgabe“ suggests some further details. A paragraph is included entitled „Vermehrung des Wortschatzes“. Some written variations of the text are called for and finally comes the demand: „Erzählen Sie die Fabel ausführlicher und benutzen Sie dabei so viel als möglich die obigen Fragen als Leitfaden“. It is intended that all this subject matter be talked over thoroly with the students before a written exercise is demanded.

This process of expansion of a given subject matter seems to follow very naturally upon the summarizing process described above. However, many teachers will prefer for the regular composition work of the students a text book of the older type with English texts to be translated into German. Composition books are now to be had which provide parallel German models so that composition remains still in a certain sense a „Bearbeitung“. The use of such composition books is thoroly in line with the rest of the course here described.

The use of a fixed English text seems to have certain advantages. All the students have brought to class their composition books and therein they have translated into German identical sentences. These sentences are written on the board, the board work is corrected by the class and the members of the class correct their composition work from the board. By this smoothly working system the teacher may be fairly sure that attentive members of his class have in their possession a correct translation of the passage in question, which can be and unfortunately too often is handed down to successive generations of German students as a perfect example of correct German construction.

As against this exterior correctness, the other method, that of expansion of a fable or anecdote according to a plan indicated only to outline, presents the great advantage of being natural. The student is not translating into German, he is writing German. It is true that the student will not correct his sentences with the same mechanical accuracy as in the other case. He has written certain sentences and has made certain errors. How can he correct in his book these errors with the aid of the different errors that have been made and corrected on the board?

If a teacher has the entirely laudable ideal of a perfect composition book he will never be satisfied with any text book excepting one demanding uniform sentences of all students. If on the other hand he cares more about independence and self confidence on the part of the student he will be tempted to experiment with books of the new type. Here a warning must be dropped. It will not do to trust entirely to the student for correction of this latter type of composition. The student should come privately to the teacher with his compositions. The composition book should be opened at random and all the errors of two or three pages should be listed. The student should be warned against these particular errors. A few



weeks later the same student should come and newer pages should be reviewed to see whether progress has been made.

This latter and freer type of composition book should not be used except by a teacher who has a correct speaking knowledge of the language, nor should it be used by any teacher so heavily burdened with work that he cannot give his students some of the individual work just described.

One or two suggestions in regard to the handling of composition in class: The student should not be permitted to take his text book or composition book to the board. If a fixed text has been used the sentences should be written on slips of paper and distributed at the board. If a story is to be freely narrated the story should be divided into parts and the parts indicated to the students on taking the board. Thus No. 1 relates: *Warum die Mäuse eine Versammlung hielten*; No. 2: *Wie sie ihre Versammlung eröffneten*; No. 3: *Ein vorwitziges Mäuschen und sein Vorschlag usw.*

It is convenient to have all compositions written into uniform notebooks. The right hand pages should contain the compositions, the left hand pages may then be reserved for correction and alternative expressions.

When the art of summarizing extended narration and of expanding skeleton narration has been mastered the intermediate stage of composition may be said to have been completed. The vast majority of our students do not progress beyond this point. Detailed description of the further stages need not be entered into. Yet even the high school student should have a glimpse into the region beyond, and of the ultimate stage wherein thoughts clothe themselves in language without the conscious presence of rules of grammar.

The writer at one stage in his career used to indulge in foot races. His activities in this direction were supervised by a villanous looking man who pistol in hand shouted at frequent intervals "Dig in there!" "Limber up your back!" "Lift up your knees!" "Pull in your chin!" "Stride out!" and when in the effort to fulfill all these directions speed was forgotten, he shouted again punctuated with pistol shots "Dig in there!" On the day of the race, however, he laid more kindly hand than usual on his charges and said: "Never mind form, but get there!" Should not our German students have sometimes their field days, in which they might be allowed to forget form and should be encouraged to get there? Such field days should not be frequent and obviously the class room is not their place, but here is the service the German club may render. Passive membership in the club is a pleasure and stimulus to no one. German conversation should form a part of every program. Some clubs prepare a numbered program of conversational topics, then have the members fill out the programs according to pleasure and talk in pairs for two or three minutes on the subjects in order. This exercise is most stimulating to the students and the amount of bad German that can be spoken in this way in thirty minutes defies all calculation.

For the serious student who wishes to develop himself further on the basis of the beginning he has made in the school there are ways still open. He may be fortunate enough to find a native German of good pronunciation and pedagogical instincts who will converse with him at times. Failing that he may select some drama, preferably Ibsen in German translation. Such dramas may be had for about five or ten cents in Reclam's edition. Almost any page selected at random will provide a mass of every day expressions. These should be translated into English and a week or so later translated back into German and then compared with the original. The written language is still more readily mastered by a conscientious application of this method of imitation and assimilation, till the point is reached where further mastery of language becomes a striving for style, and here the last stage begins and ends only with life itself.

In the emphasis thus laid upon the spoken language the interests of the student who wishes to acquire rapidly a reading knowledge of German are not forgotten. In the long run he too will profit most by the intensive study of short texts as the outset. In reading we encounter many new ideas, each bearing its label, but we see them in a crowd and when we meet them again we meet as strangers; but once we have audibly called an idea by its right name, idea and name are inseparably associated for us and we recognize our friend even in the most unusual surroundings.

The topic of this paper is "Natural Methods of teaching composition". Under that title a whole German course has been outlined. It could not have been otherwise. Formerly German composition was a phase of the German instruction to be indulged in once or twice a week, but German composition is the art of writing and speaking German and the teaching of the rudiments of that art is the chief aim of the present day elementary and intermediate instruction in German.

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## Berichte und Notizen.

### I. Korrespondenzen.

#### Chicago.

Die *Okttober-Versammlung* unseres *Vereins deutscher Lehrer* war ein grosser Erfolg. Nicht nur war sie beinahe vollzählig besucht, sondern der Vortrag des Herrn Professor Scherger vom Armour-Institut war auch einer der inhaltsreichsten, die je vor unserem Vereine gehalten wurden. Herr Scherger, ein Amerikaner, sprach in gewähltem Deutsch über Bismarck und sagte auch denjenigen, die über das Leben und die Wirksamkeit des grossen Reichskanzlers wohl unterrichtet waren, sicherlich manches Neue.

Unsere Schulsuperintendentin, *Frau Dr. Ella Flagg Young*, hat sich entschlossen, ihr Amt am 8. Dezember niederzulegen. Das ist für den deutschen Unterricht ein harter Schlag. Die ganz ausserordentliche Zunahme an neuen Schulen und an Kindern ist vor allem ihrem wohlwollenden Einfluss zu verdanken gewesen, ohne welchen ein solches Wachstum unmöglich gewesen wäre. Die deutschen Lehrer von Chicago und die deutschen Väter und Mütter haben alle Ursache, Frau Young ein dankbares Andenken als oberste Leiterin unseres Schulwesens zu bewahren.